

GHS senior perseveres for diploma

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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After passing a computerized math test during summer school last week, Jacob Williams was done.

He thought he'd walk out of Gothenburg High School with diploma in hand without a second glance.

What Williams didn't expect, the morning of June 26, was a cluster of summer school classmates, administrators and staff waiting to congratulate him in the main street hallway.

And a mortar board hat, a cake with his name on it and applause after the diploma was bestowed.

"I had no idea," he said after the graduation party. "I just expected to get my diploma and leave."

High school principal Randy Evans praised Williams for having the tenacity to finish high school weeks after his fellow classmates finished in May.

"He overcame obstacles, met the challenge and we are very proud of him," Evans said. "He can now go out into the world and make a difference."

With Williams receiving a diploma, Evans noted that 100% of the Class of 2013 has graduated.

"That's not happened in several years," he said.

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Last semester, Williams fell behind in math and history and couldn't catch up.

Fortunately summer school was available so the 18-year-old could make up the work.

"I knew a high diploma was important and I also knew it was something I wanted to get," Williams said.

But he had to show up.

Four hours each week day for four weeks.



"It wasn't really that hard," Williams said about the self-paced computer program students use and with two para educators on hand to give individualized help. "But it does take a lot of effort to push through this school thing."

For the last two years of high school, Williams drove back and forth from North Platte where he lives with his father except for some nights when he stayed overnight with a brother and later a friend in Gothenburg.

Now he's looking forward to enrolling at WyoTech in Laramie, WY, where he will take classes in automotive and motor sports fabrication.

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“I want to go out into the world and make money doing what I love,” he said.

Cars are Williams’ passion.

“I’ve been around them all my life,” he said, noting that he’s worked on vehicles through the years with his father, Jimmy Williams, who is a mechanic at Bosselman’s in North Platte.

Williams’ mother, Yvonne Williams, lives in Tulsa, OK.

For the rest of the summer, Williams plans to repair cars and hang out with friends.

He offers some parting advice to “other slackers.”

“Don’t slack because when it comes around to your senior year, you don’t want to end up in my situation.”

ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com

308-537-3636